

Westmont College The Horizon

Voice

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Since when has being a minority in America been the same as being an American in another country? The assumption that one knows what it is like to be a minority simply because he or she has traveled to another country or lived in a predominantly diverse racial neighborhood is inaccurate.

In the case of the latter, without denying that a white minority living in a racially diverse area would experience discomfort, they still enjoy the perks of the larger white majority that have been institutionalized in this country throughout history. If it is the former, realize this: white Americans have the option of returning to their 'home country' where they were born and raised, and their culture or race would not be mocked or held against them. Unfortunately, minorities who were born and raised here do not have that luxury in this country.

Furthermore, when American travelers meet with hostility the question must be asked: is it their race or citizenship being attacked? Anti-American sentiments cross racial lines. Keep in mind that regardless of what abuse we may experience in other countries, we still are in some position of power as citizens of a wealthy and powerful country.

Now imagine, instead of traveling, living your whole life in a country where you are still being marginalized, and your culture or ethnic identity is being degraded and devalued on a daily basis. Imagine that this is the country you were born into. And this country's history is inescapable.

Racism carries with it not only personal pain and the threat of violence but stigma and oppression. It continues for

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generations, evolving from blatant persecution to more subtle variations.

Think what it is like to know that your parents felt it, that you will not be able to protect your children from it. There is nowhere you can go to escape it-not even to a Christian college.

In fact, it may be even worse there. Your talents, idiosyncrasies and affinities are attributed to your race-you wear big earrings because you are Mexican, you can dance because you are Black, you aren't a good driver because you are Asian.

Ethnic clubs who try to celebrate differences and include them in the community are attacked as being divisive. People with different physical characteristics see them plastered on a poster in an exaggerated demeanor, reaffirming that they are in contrast to the majority.

When you try to call attention to it, to fight for change, no one gives your words value. Very few will even try to understand. You are told to "get over it," to "get thicker skin," to "laugh it off" when someone attacks a fundamental part of who you are-something you cannot change or hide, even if you wanted to.

You are told that there is no discrepancy between the way people of different ethnicities are treated, even though you experience it personally. Why is it ok to wound brothers and sisters? How is that humorous? To whom is such degradation amusing?

We are living in an era of increased interaction between different people groups, and it is only fair for every person to go about these interactions with a genuine respect that upholds the dignity and value of another person's culture, ethnicity, gender or creed.

Is it fair to call someone overly sensitive or "thin-skinned" when humor is being used to undermine the identity and dignity of another? And what is less Christian-political correctness" or emotionally and

psychologically wounding another person?
God cries out for justice. He does not tell
the oppressed to see the humor in their
situation.

At this point, we know that not everyone is convinced that there is a problem with racism at Westmont. Moreover, we realize that as minority students, our ethnicities automatically discredit our opinions on the matter in the eyes of some readers.

Nonetheless, we believe that if Westmont desires to be the Christian community that it claims, at the very least we need to hear the experiences of others out of genuine concern for our brothers and sisters before we simply pass judgment, instead of writing them off as "too thin-skinned."

-Sarah Akinwale, Jane Messah, Alexis Ortiz, Jesse Bernal